

The science of laughter

Professor Sophie Scott



7.30 p.m 3rd February, 2016
Main Lecture Theatre, (3.25)
John Anderson Building
University of Strathclyde

Biography

I am Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London, where I study the human voice, how brains perceive and produce our voices, and how this can go wrong. I have pioneered the study both of speech and emotion in the voice, and have recently been examining positive emotions such as laughter.

Scott was born in Blackburn, England. She received her PhD in Cognitive Science at UCL in 1994 and went on to work in Cambridge at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit (formerly Applied Psychology Unit) in Cambridge. She returned to UCL as a Research Fellow in 1998. She was awarded a Wellcome Trust Fellowship in 2001 and has been funded by them since. She currently holds a Wellcome Trust Senior Fellowship. She is a member of the British Psychological Society, the Society for Neuroscience, the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, and the Experimental Psychology Society. She was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2012.

<http://www.icn.ucl.ac.uk/Staff-Lists/MemberDetails.php?Title=Prof&FirstName=Sophie&LastName=Scott>

Summary

In my talk I will be addressing the science of human laughter, and considering it from an evolutionary and developmental perspective, as well as a physical act and a vocalized sound. I will outline the social and interactive aspects of laughter, and how it changes with the life span, as well as the neural systems involved in the perception of laughter. I will argue that laughter is a social behaviour which is linked to humour, but which is primarily not associated with humour. I will address studies showing that the use of laughter is a critical factor in close emotional relationships as a way of regulating negative emotions.